ATLANTA LESBIAN FEMINIST ALLIANCE
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# ain't ia woman?

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# the woman-identified ♀/♀

What is a lesbian? A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion. She is the woman who, often beginning at an extremely early age, acts in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being than her society--perhaps then, but certainly later--cares to allow her. These needs and actions, over a period of years, bring her into painful conflict with people, situations, the accepted ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, until she is in a state of continual war with everything around her, and usually with her self. She may not be fully conscious of the political implications of what for her began as personal necessity, but on some level she has not been able to accept the limitations and oppression laid on her by the most basic role of her society--the female role. The turmoil she experiences tends to induce guilt proportional to the degree to which she feels she is not meeting social expectations, and/or eventually drives her to question and analyse what the rest of her society more or less accepts. She is forced to evolve her own life pattern, often living much of her life alone, learning usually much earlier than her "straight" (heterosexual) sisters about the essential aloneness of life ( which the myth of marriage obscures) and about the reality of illusions. To the extent that she cannot expel the heavy socialization that goes with being female, she can never truly find peace with herself. For she is caught somewhere between accepting society's view of her--in which case she cannot accept herself, and coming to understand what this sexist society has done to her and why it is functional and necessary for it to do so. Those of us who work that through find ourselves on the other side of a tortuous journey through a night that may have been decades long. The perspective gained from that journey, the liberation of self, the inner peace, the real love of self and of all women, is something to be shared with all women--because we are all women.

It should first be understoood that lesbianism, like male homosexuality, is a category of behaviour possible only in a sexist society characterized by rigid sex roles and dominated by male supremacy. Those sex roles dehumanize women by defining us as a supportive/serving caste *in relation to* the master caste of men, and emotionally cripple men by demanding that they be alienated from their own bodies and emotions in order to perform their economic/political/military funcitons effectively. Homosexuality is a by-product of a particular way of setting up roles (or approved patterns of behaviour) on the basis of sex; as such it is an inauthentic (not consonant with "reality") category. In a society in which men do not oppress women, and sexual expression is allowed to follow feelings, the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality would disappear.

But lesbianism is also different from male homosexuality, and serves a different function in the society. "Dyke" is a different kind of put-down from "faggot", although both imply you are not playing your socially assigned sex role. . are not therefore a "real woman" or a "real man". The grudging admiration felt for the tomboy, and the queasiness felt around a sissy boy point to the same thing: the contempt in which women--or those who play a female role --are held. And the investment in keeping women in that contemptuous role is very great. Lesbian is the word, the label, the condition that holds women in line. When a woman hears this word tossed her way, she knows she is stepping out of line. She knows that she has crossed the terrible boundary of her sex role. She recoils, she protests, she reshapes her actions to gain approval. Lesbian is a label invented by the Man to throw at any woman who dares to be his equal, who dares to challenge his prerogatives (including that of all women as part of the exchange medium among men), who dares to assert the primacy of her own needs. To have the label applied to people active in women's liberation is just the most recent instance of a long history; older women will recall that not so long ago, any woman who was successful, independent, not orienting her whole life aobut a man, would hear this word. For in this sexist society, for a woman to be independent means she *can't be* a woman — she must be a dyke. That in itself should tell us where women are at. It says as clearly as can be said: women and person are contradictory terms. For a lesbian is not considerd a "real woman." And yet, in popular thinking, there is really only one essential difference between a lesbian and other women: that of sexual orientation--which is to say, when you strip off all the packaging, you must finally realize that the essence of being a "woman" is to get fucked by men.

"Lesbian" is one of the sexual categories by which men have divided up humanity. While all women are dehumanized as sex objects, as the objects of men they are given certain compensations: identification with his power, his ego, his status, his protection (from other males), feeling like a "real woman," finding social acceptance by adhering to her role, etc. Should a woman confront herself by confronting another woman, there are fewer rationalizations, fewer buffers by which to avoid the stark horror of her dehumanized condition. Herein we find the overriding fear of many women towards being used as a sexual object by a woman, which not only will bring her no male-connected compensations, but also will reveal the void which is woman's real situation. This dehumanization is expressed when a straight woman learns that a sister is a lesbian; she begins to relate to her lesbian sister as her potential sex object, laying a surrogate male role on the lesbian. This reveals her heterosexual conditioning to make herself into an object when sex is potentially involved in a relationship, and it denies the lesbian her full humanity. For women, especially those in the movement, to perceive their lesbian sisters through this male grid of role definitions is to accept this male cultural conditioning and to oppress their sisters much as they themselves have been oppressed by men. Are we going to continue the male classification system of defining all females in sexual relation to some other category of people? Affixing the label lesbian not only to a woman who aspires to be a person, but also to any situation of real love, real solidarity, real primacy among women is a primary form of divisiveness among women: it is the condition which keeps women within the confines of the feminine role, and it is the debunking/scare term that keeps women from forming any primary attachments, groups, or associations among ourselves.

Women in the movement have in most cases gone to great lengths to avoid discussion and confrontation with the issue of lesbianism. It puts people up-tight. They are hostile, evasive, or try to incorporate it into some "broader issue." They would rather not talk about it. If they have to, they try to dismiss it as a "lavender herring." But it is no side issue. It is absolutely essential to the success and fulfillment of the women's liberation movement that this issue be dealt with. As long as the label "dyke" can be used to frighten women into a less militant stand, keep her separate from her sisters, keep her from giving primacy to anything other than men and family—then to that extent she is controlled by the male culture. Until women see in each other the possibility of a primal commitment which includes sexual love, they will be denying themselves the love and value they readily accord to men, thus affirming their second-class status. As long as male acceptability is primary--both to individual women and to the movement as a whole--the term lesbian will be used effectively against women. Insofar as women want only more privileges within the system, they do not want to antagonize male power. They instead seek acceptability for women's liberation, and the most crucial aspect of the acceptability for women's liberation, and the most crucial aspect of the acceptability is to deny lesbianism--i.e., deny any fundamental challenge to the basis of the female It should also be said that some younger, more radical women have honestly begun to discuss lesbianism, but so far it has been primarily as a sexual "alternative" to men. This, however, is still giving primacy to men, both because the idea of relating more completely to women occurs as a negative reaction to men, and because the lesbian relationship is being characterized simply by sex which is divisive and sexist. On one level, which is both personal and political, women may withdraw emotional and sexual energies from men, and work out various alternatives for those energies in their own lives. On a different political/psychological level, it must be understood that what is crucial is that women begin disengaging from male-defined response patterns. In the privacy of our own psyches, we must cut those cords to the core. For irrespective of where our love and sexual energies flow, if we are male-identified in our heads, we cannot realize our autonomy as human beings.

But why is it that women have related to and through men? By virtue of having been brought up in a male society, we have internalized the male culture's definition of ourselves. That definition consigns us to sexual and familty functions, and excludes us from defining and shaping the terms of our lives. In exchange for our psychic servicing and for performing society's non-profit-making functions, the man confers on us just one thing: the slave status which makes us legitimate in the eyes of the society in which we live. This is called "femininity" or "being a real woman" in our cultural lingo. We are authentic, legitimate, real to the extent that we are the property of some man whose name we bear. To be a woman who belongs to no man is to be invisible, pathetic, inauthentic, unreal. He confirms his image of us--of what we have to be in order to be acceptable by him--but not our real selves; he confirms our womanhood--as he defines it, in relation to him--but cannot confirm our personhood, our own selves as absolutes. As long as we are dependent on the male culture for this definition, for this approval, we cannot be free.

The consequence of internalizing this role is an enormous reservoir of self-hate. This is not to say the self-hate is recognized or accepted as such; indeed most women would deny it. It may be experienced as discomfort with her role, as feeling empty, as numbness, as restlessness, a paralyzing anxiety at the center. Alternatively, it may be expressed in shrill defensiveness of the glory and destiny of her role. But it does exist, often beneath the edge of her consciousness, poisoning her existence, keeping her alienated from herself, her own needs, and rendering her a stranger to other women. They try to escape by identifying with the oppressor, living through him, gaining status and identity from his ego, his power, his accomplishments. And by not identifying with other "empty vessels" like themselves. Women resist relating on all levels to other women who will reflect their own oppression, their own secondary status, their own self-hate. For to confront another woman is finally to confront one's self -- the self we have gone to such lengths to avoid. And in that mirror we know we cannot really respect and love that which we have been made to be.

As the source of self-hate and the lack of real self are rooted in our male-given identity, we must create a new sense of self. As long as we cling to the idea of "being a woman," we will sense some conflict with that incipient self, that sense of I, that sense of a whole person. It is very difficult to realize and accept that being "feminine" and being a whole person are irreconcilable. Only women can give to each other a new sense of self. That identity we have to develop with reference to ourselves, and not in relation to men. This consciousness is the revolutionary force from which all else will follow, for ours is an organic revolution. For this we must be available and supportive to one another, give our commitment and our love, give the emotional support necessary to sustain this movement. Our energies must flow toward our sisters, not backwards toward our oppressors. As long as woman's liberation tries to free women without facing the basic heterosexual structure that binds us in one-to-one relationship with our oppressors, tremendous energies will continue to flow into trying to straighten up each particular relationship with a man, how to get better sex, how to turn his head around -- into trying to make the "new man" out of him, in the delusion that this will allow us to be the "new woman." This obviously splits out energies and commitments ,leaving us unable to be committed to the construction of the new patterns which will liberate us.

It is the primacy of women relating to women, of women creating a new consciousness of and with each other which is at the heart of women's liberation, and the basis for the cultural revolution. Together we must find, reinforce and validate our authentic selves. As we do this, we confirm in each other that struggling incipient sense of pride and strength, the divisive barriers begin to melt, we feel this growing solidarity with our sisters. We see ourselves as prime, find our centers inside of ourselves. We find receding the sense of alienation, of being cut off, of being behind a locked window, of being unable to get out what we know is inside. We feel a real-ness, feel at last we are coinciding with ourselves. With that real self, with that consciousness, we begin a revolution to end the imposition of all coercive identifications. and to achieve maximum autonomy in human expression.

Radecalesbians

SOJOURNER TRUTH,
"THE LIBYAN SIBYL."

"That man over there say that a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me a best place ...
And ain't I a women? Look at me. Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me...
And ain't I a women? I could work as much and eat as much as a man when I could get it, and bear the lash as well...
And ain't I a woman? I have borned thirteen children and seen them most all sold off into slavery. And when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard...
And ain't I a woman?"

Sojurner Truth: Speech before the Woman's Rights Convention at Akron, Ohio in 1851.

# WOMAN

Graphic--Female Liberation Newsletter --Minneapolis

## so we put it on

## the lavender t-shirt fit....

As I thought about what the woman identified woman concept has meant to me, I realized that in fact I was reviewing the past eight months of my life. In eight months I've gone through the gambit--from wondering why I wasn't gay to realizing what an important part being gay is in my life. During this time I've read the woman identified woman idea many times. I remember the first time I read it, the article hardly phased me at all. Then each suceeding time that I read it, I became more and more amazed by how it was able to say what seemed to be everything in just two short pages.

I think that we will be continually struggling with the woman identified woman idea in the future, for we still are extremely male-identified, and we are far from "realizing our autonomy as human beings." In fact all too often I see women putting heterosexual definitions on gay women, trying to straighten out individual relationships with men and working to create new men. Their actions deny the importance of an autonomous feminist movement.

In Ain't I A Woman? we have talked about woman identified woman and the phrase has been used frequently. Many women are acquainted with the term, but in fact their actions show little understanding. Gay women here are pretty up front about being gay and that's pretty much accepted. However, what is conveniently forgotten is the differences between the heterosexual and homosexual experience. Too often it is forgotten that some women experience oppression not only because of their sex but also the oppression of a heterosexual world. Sisters forget that gay women may see something in a little different light or that certain things are perfectly irrelevant to their life.

Also, it is forgotten that very few gay women are out of the closets. In Iowa City a small community of gay women has come together. Some of these women live together, and we all socialize with each other. However, we are by no means all the gay women there are in Iowa City. Our gay sisters who have not come out still feel totally isolated and do not even have the comfort and protection of the group that we have built. Women forget that what some gay women have been working to build here, is in fact, in direct contradiction to the outside world. This heterosexual male-identified society can not allow gay women to live and discover their needs together for any length of time.

Last, the woman identified woman concept is essential to a feminist movement. However, when I look about me I see nothing but difficulty dealing with the issue. Straight women are threatened by the words and gay women become defensive or quiet. All remember past discussions and old pains. We will continue to discuss woman identified woman in the paper, but it will be a long time before we are comfortable with the term.

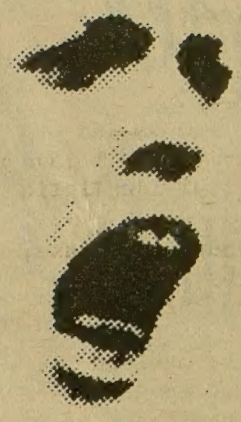
I read woman identified woman last Spring 1970 when it appeared in Rat. It excited me. It was an example of why I loved Rat and respected Women's Liberation so much. It was a new thought, new perspective, and an important analysis that had never been made of a subject that has never adequately been dealt with. That's the way I thought about the article in my head. On an emotional level it was deeply important to me. It described my personal experience as a lesbian in a political way and thus absolved me from my guilt of being sick or preverted.

In June a few of us went to the Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day celebration in NYC and upon our return wrote an article in which we expressed the anger of lesbians at women in the movement who "turn and give their ultimate love to their oppressor." What we were trying to express was the concept of woman identified woman. The article caused much controversy in Women's Liberation here and the fledgling gay cell was put in the position of having to defend it. I couldn't handle the conflict at all and remember thinking how easy it would be if the gay cell split off from Women's Liberation and was allowed to develop its own politics in peace.

Eventually, however, Women's Liberation did deal with our article and Woman Identified Woman but not verbally. The verbal thing is strange, because every time someone asks me to explain what a woman identified woman is, I can't. And yet it is very clear to me what it means in personal actions and political ones. About this time though I realized that I have been woman identified for just about all of my life and so I guess it's not so strange that it would be something that I would know inside and find hard to explain. The gay cell could not explain in words what a woman identified woman was and why we thought it was important. And it wasn't until some of the women in Women's Liberation came to understand it emotionally that we as a group were able to move politically on the concept. Fitting, I think.

If Women's Liberation is to gain meaninful advances for women, it must become woman identified and that means the women in it must become woman identified. I think that women in Women's Liberation who profess to believe in what Women's liberation stands for (esp. the destruction of sex roles) and who have also come to appreciate the company of women over the oppressive company of males, that these women are hypocrites if they are not gay or are not at least in the process of dealing with their straightness. Obviously, women who gain a goodly share of their emotional needs from men will have difficulty advocating politically things which are not in the interest of men, but which would free women, eg. the destruction of the institution of marriage or the nuclear family. And when the going gets rough, who will be left standing with the sisters? One thing is certain, the male identified women will have faded back into the wood work of the male left long ago.

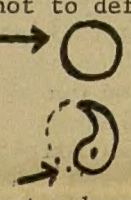
♀/♀



Thoughts on the yin-yang; it is a composite of 2 figures; the limits of each of the 2 are determined by the opposite and by the whole

what is feminine
what is masculine
what is human

The definition of woman is limited by the definition of man; in a male-dominated culture, all the important positive qualities are assigned to the male. A woman is not to define herself by the whole range of humankind because her limits are set by the inclusion of a rigidly defined male.



*"It's a hard world to get a break in / All the good things have been taken.."*

Political means physical relationships between/among people. How people are reaating to each other everyday is the political "climate". Culture describes the political climate and may indicate in some ways whether the culture is reflecting or falsifying what's actually happening.

To identify with women, as women, is to identify with powerlessness. The power that a women has, if any, is not recognized by the male power structure as being important enough for them to have already monopolized. Woman's power is outside of the economic-political market, confined to domestic situations. The only power relationships in which women can take control are with other women - sexual and otherwise; and with children - physical means of approval or denial, like spanking or controlling the child's food and activity. But the child often has the alternative of a man's support <u>against</u> the woman.

So the only physical power a woman has is to relate physically to a woman. People are hesitant to legitimize power to people who are not usually in that position of power (liken to a child with her first dollar.)

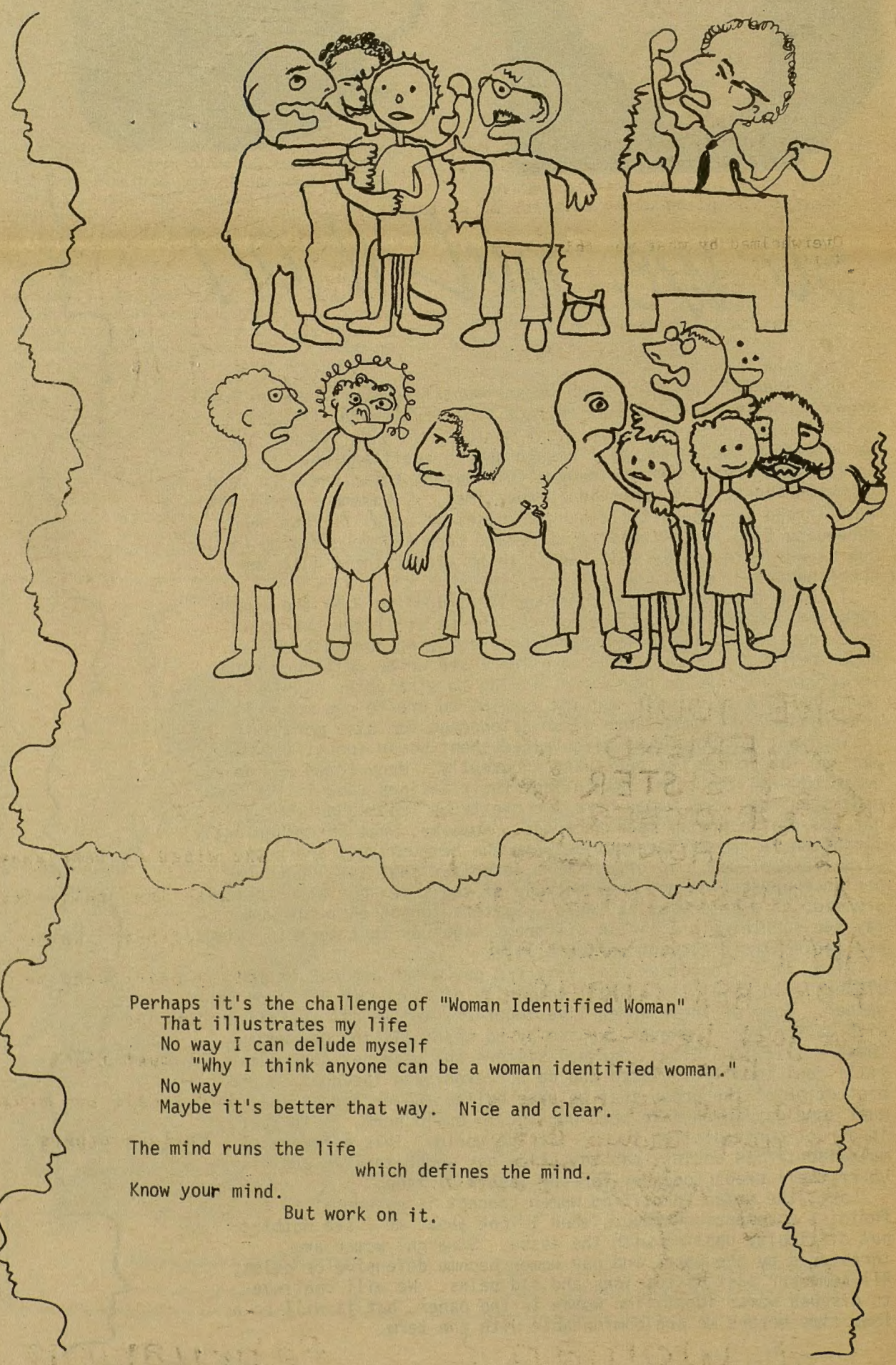
RAMBLING ON WOMEN-IDENTIFIED WOMEN

I don't remember when that term or concept became meaningful to me - to us. I know I was afraid to break the ties (marriage) - I felt torn alliances. I did not identify - I didn't trust other women. I still felt like an exception somehow - better than most women - more male than most women - a prize for the exceptional male - only I couldn't find him - didn't have him.

Anyway I felt all of this at the same time as I was feeling - we cannot work together (women - specifically the paper collective) unless we trust each other. Personally my experiences that made me not trust women generally were pretty the same. I established strong relationships with women only to have them fall apart - hurt - because they felt a stronger alliance with some man. Pretty simple - ha ha. Always knew to win anything - risks have to be taken. Knew real early to fight against, say job conditions you might lose your job. I knew that to be a radical female must mean breaking the ties with men that offered some nooky - we had to risk losing if we were to win.

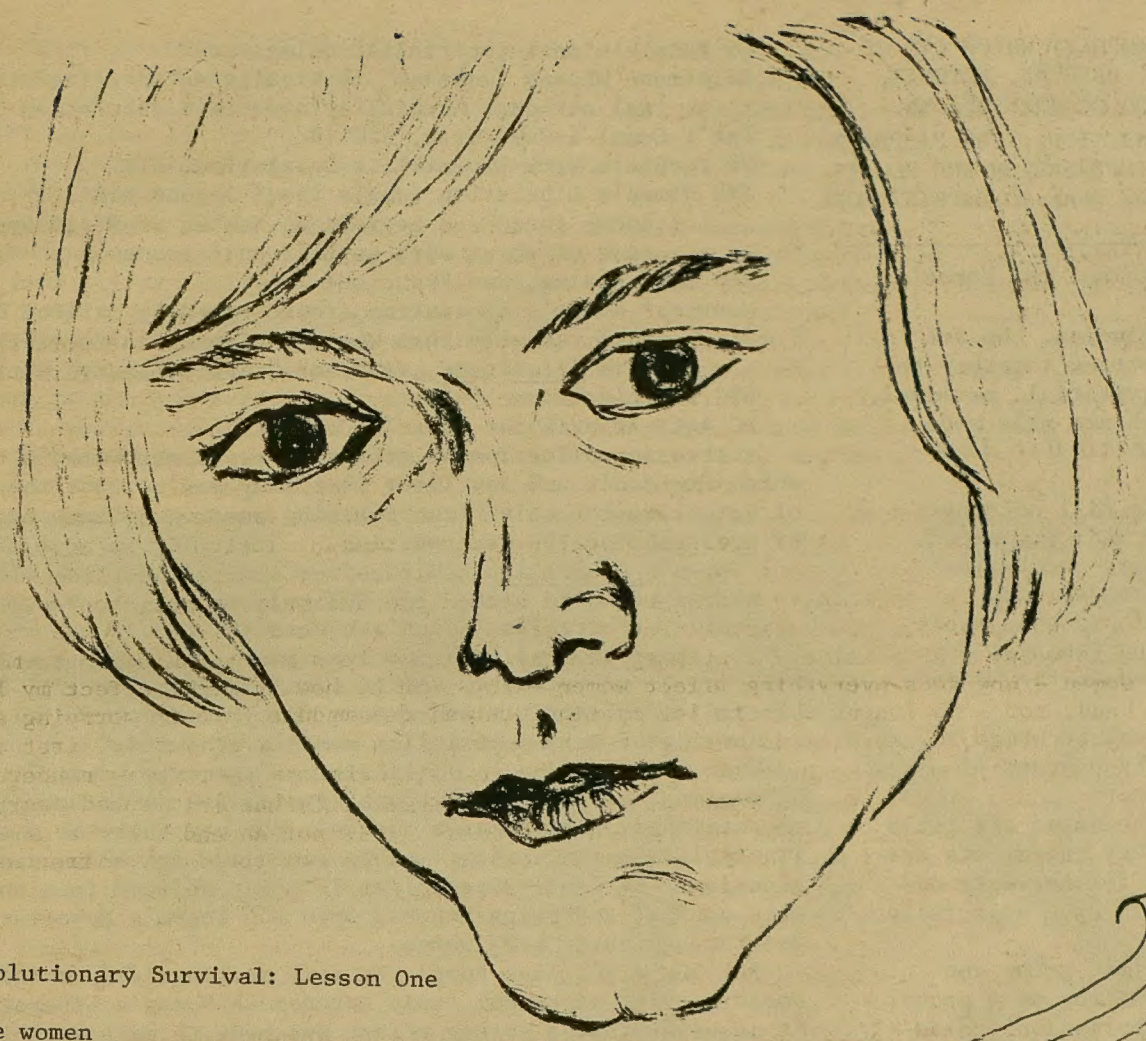
Somehow it all eventually - sort of - fell together. The only thing I became sure of - the prerequisite for some kind of struggle - I (we) had to identify as women with women - a positive - a primary identification - to start thinking in terms of women - how does everything affect women - not torn by how it might effect my husband, too - no longer able to let my mind (our minds) muddle through worrying about everything else more or as much as worrying about women. I am primarily first and foremost a woman - my primary relationships are with women - my primary concerns are with women - my strongest commitments are with women. This has influenced everything I do - this has influenced our work on the paper. It is not an end - but a necessary beginning - a crucial step which were it not to be taken we could never free women 'cause we couldn't define women.

PUZZLE:: We want to unite with all women and as women free ourselves from the oppression women suffer because of being women. Find the women in this picture and just try to unite with them.



Perhaps it's the challenge of "Woman Identified Woman"
That illustrates my life
No way I can delude myself
"Why I think anyone can be a woman identified woman."
No way
Maybe it's better that way. Nice and clear.

The mind runs the life
which defines the mind.
Know your mind.
But work on it.



Revolutionary Survival: Lesson One

More women
should throw
more dishes
at more walls
more often

Sad
is a clean feeling,
the pain of
setting
a broken life.

Being a young freak is sort of okay
But when I'm old
and my friends have gone off with men,
too tired to fight, taking what's offered,
Where will I be but very alone?
What is the place of my love for my sisters?

Overwhelmed by what you think I am
I lost me
in the shuffle

It's not that I miss you
But I got into the habit of loving
And I have to be
Retrained
In a usable skill.

Be gentle
with the broken puppet
while she tries to cut the strings

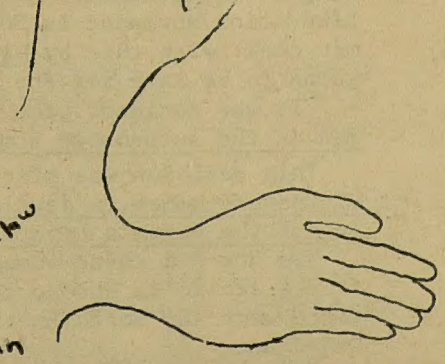
Mary Peltier

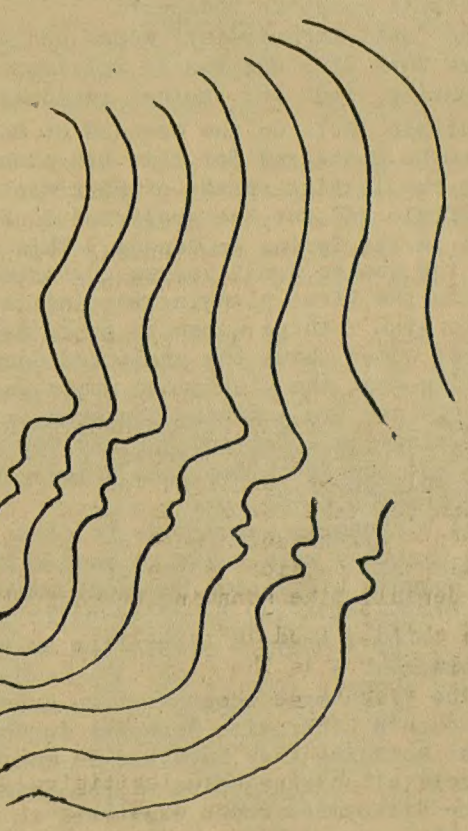
What was that?
words onto lines;
what's in your heart?
Fool- be true!
Released to love you,
my sisters of the world.
Perception and sympathy I love you
And you, you logical-idealistic

paradox
paragon , devoured by cause,
by doubt, by impetus
Flash of light on this rainy
night
And the face of my love
and strength appears.
You hold the best part of me
in your eyes
As I struggle to the surface
of my life's dream.

Things like
gay liberation
give me a false sense of hope:

that I could sell Come Out
on the streets here
that most of my generation
isn't doomed
*that freaks are beautiful people*
not elitism's children
that we know how to forsake
everything our parents
taught us
to be
just like them
sexist
racist
speedfreaks,
really
wasted.





She wiped my tear away
with the gentle touch
of pain shared
But my pain turns to
anger and
I must fight
For myself and others I love...
I love others

GIVE YOUR
FRIEND
SISTER
MOTHER
AUNT
grandma
lover
doctor
sister-in-law
librarian
daughter
niece
cousin
A SUBSCRIPTION TO
AIN'T I A WOMAN
FOR HER BIRTHDAY
(or just because you
like her)
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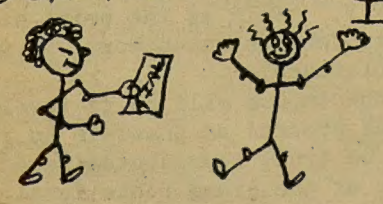

THE FOURTH WORLD MAINIFESTO IS A 32 PAGE PAMPHLET WHICH CAN BE ORDERED FROM: WOMEN - FOURTH WORLD, 741 W. BETHUNE, DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48202. 50¢ EA. - FOR ORDERS OF 100 OR MORE 35¢ EA.

WE HAVE REPRINTED EXCERPTS FROM THE FIRST SECTION. THE PAMPHLET GOES ON TO DISCUSS FURTHER THE MEANING OF IMPERIALISM AND HOW IT RELATES TO WOMEN AND THE FEMALE CULTURE. WE PLAN TO REPRINT MORE OF THIS IN FUTURE ISSUES.

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An Angry Response to an Imperialist Venture Against the Women's Liberation Movement

Let us first make one thing clear from the beginning. We are emphatically for women from all over the world getting together to overcome male imposed boundaries between us - territorial, national, imperialist or ideological barriers - all of which are male made and maintained. (Please see the "Open Letter to Our Indochinese Sisters" page 12)

We expect to be misunderstood by some women who will no doubt hurl charges of "racist" and "imperialist" at us. All we ask of them is that they listen with their own women's ears and begin to see with their own women's eyes what we are trying to say.

But the people we are hoping to communicate with in this Manifesto are our sisters in the Women's Liberation and Feminist Movement and sisters who may just be getting interested in the Women's Movement.

We are writing this Manifesto in reply to the way in which a "Women's" Conference is being planned and set up by a group of women who call themselves "anti-imperialist" women.

(We do not feel that we have to concede to these women the title of anti-imperialist since we strongly feel that they themselves are acting as colonial-native (female) administrators for the male defined Left in relationship to other women - in this case especially to Women's Liberation Women.)

We find it self evident that women are a colonized group who have never - anywhere - been allowed self-determination as a group. Therefore all women who fight against their own oppression (colonized status) as females under male domination are anti-imperialist by definition.

From this perspective we will analyze the assertions implied by the "anti-imperialist" women that they are a super-conscious group somehow more "aware" of imperialism than are the Women's Liberationists and Feminists. In the second half of the Manifesto we will analyze women's relationship (as a colonized group) and the independent Women's Movement (anti-colonial force) in relationship to other colonized groups and their organizations.

Since we feel that the leaflet which these "anti-imperialist" women put out very effectively describes the process of co-option and manipulation, we simply present quotes from it with some "explanation" (and exclamations) as the first part of this Manifesto. The quotes show what the "anti-imperialist" women want to do - in contradiction to what the Vietnamese women want.

BACKGROUND

Some background of the idea and planning of the Conference is helpful to avoid confusion as to exactly what the whole Conference idea was about and how it originated.

"The idea of the Conference (between Indochinese women and North American women) was developed in conversations among North Vietnamese, WSP (Women Strike for Peace) and VOW, an organization similar to WSP."[1]

The Conference is planned to take place in the Spring of'71 .

The women who sent out the leaflet quoted in this Manifesto are not WSP or VOW women. They define themselves as anti-imperialist women. They also sent a representative later to speak with the Vietnamese women in Budapest.

The "anti-imperialist" women had three planning meetings. One in New York City and two in Baltimore. The leaflet was sent out announcing plans for another regional planning meeting to be held in Buffalo, N.Y. on the weekend of Dec. 5-6. Women's Liberation was to be contacted for this 4th planning meeting in Buffalo.

So the leaflet speaks of past meetings and plans for the meeting in Buffalo and for the projected Conference with the Indochinese women in the Spring in Canada. This information is necessary so that the quotes don't become confusing as to references to meetings.

Also the first planning meeting in New York picked - or decided how to pick - three women to go to Budapest to talk with the Indochinese women about the projected Conference. They are quoted as relating what the Vietnamese women wanted the Conference to be.

There are two separate conferences being planned. One between the Vietnamese women and WSP and VOW and one between the Vietnamese women and the North American Women's Liberation Movement.

CONFERENCE PLANS

The Vietnamese women made it clear to the "anti-imperialist" women that they were eager to meet with a large number of North American Women's Liberation Movement women.

"These (contacts) have led us to understand that the women are eager to have Women's Liberation as a major part of the projected Conference." p.1

"The Vietnamese women want to develop a large scale contact with the Women's Liberation Movement in North America beyond the individual contacts they have had in the past in order to develop a more substantial understanding of the Movement." p.3

The Vietnamese women expressed to the "anti-imperialist" women what they wanted to have happen. However, the rest of the "anti-imperialist" women's leaflet undermines any real involvement of the Women's Liberation Movement - the autonomous one that is - but we didn't know that there was any other Women's Liberation Movement other than an autonomous one. But the women writing the leaflet use the words autonomous Women's Liberation in contrast to what they define themselves as - anti-imperialist women.

The composition of the planning meetings indicates a complete disregard of the Women's Liberation Movement. Composition of the New York planning meeting was from:

US People's Anti-Imperialist Delegation
Baltimore WL and "Journal" (basically an anti-imperialist journal although originally a Women's Liberation journal)
Int'l Comm. & Cuba Trip, NYC
US People's Anti-Imperialist Delegation, NYC
NYC Women's Liberation (who's that? Anyone familiar with NYC knows there's a tremendous number of WL groups - only some of which work on Left only issues)
Red Moon Rising, San Francisco
Montreal Women's Liberation (represented by Marlene Dixon, who said recently that Women's Liberation Movement activities have interfered with her "revolutionary" duties)
NYC Women's Union
DC Anti-Imperialist Women's Collective

A strange collection of groups to represent Women's Liberation - which they don't and say later that they don't. But the criteria of selection for this first planning meeting is important and will be followed for the next meeting.

"Women's Liberation had received invitations from Vietnamese and Korean women to attend the Budapest meeting ..." p.1

Who were chosen as "Women's Liberation"?

"...those who had been involved in the delegation which was supposed to go to Cuba...and/or those who were part of Women's Liberation collectives and groups that had expressed an interest in working on anti-imperialist women's projects." p.1

What makes a women's collective necessarily represent Women's Liberation and what are "groups" expressing an interest in working on anti-imperialist women's issues? How can there be a non anti-imperialist women's issue- since women are not allowed self-determination? But anti-imperialist is being defined in a narrow Left-male context and being imposed upon the women's Movement by Left men through their Left women.

But one might have hoped the next meeting held in Baltimore would heavily represent truly autonomous Women's Liberation. But it is clear that a strong effort was made to make sure this did not happen.

"The women who were contacted to attend the Baltimore Conference were from cities who had collectively selected women to go to Cuba this past summer; (Atlantic, etc.) Washington women who already had the embryo of a functioning anti-imperialist collective, and women known to those at the N.Y. meeting..." p.2.

Three women were sent to Budapest and another conference was held in Baltimore. How they choose the "WL" delegate to go to Budapest was very strange.

"Based on this decision (to choose one WL (Women's Liberation) delegate), geographical locations in which there was a strong anti-imperialist women's group and a together enough situation so that someone could be chosen quickly but still collectively were discussed. Washington met all of the above criteria..."p.2

These were hardly criteria or ways to choose women to represent the Women's Liberation Movement, especially when the women themselves, quite correctly, make a distinction between the autonomous Women's Liberation Movement and anti-imperialist women. Let us again quote the statement in which they make the distinction.

"There was much discussion about two types of women who would want to attend the Conference: anti-imperialist women who are not a part of the autonomous WL Movement, and women in the autonomous Women's Movement..." p.4 (emphasis - author)

It is important to realize that the "anti- imperialist" women did not make this distinction clear (although it is obvious) until the end of the leaflet, meanwhile, throughout the leaflet, confusing the issue by speaking as if they represented the Women's Liberation Movement whenever it served their purpose to do so. And this, in spite of the fact that it was made clear to them that the Vietnamese women wanted to speak to and meet with the autonomous Women's Liberation Movement - not with women who defined themselves as 'anti-imperialist' in contradiction to being Women's Liberationists.

To return again to the point made a number of times in the leaflet that the Vietnamese women wanted to meet with and talk to a large, representative number of women in the autonomous Women's Liberation Movement in North America. The 'anti-imperialist' women dealt with this by deciding themselves how representation was going to be made for the autonomous Women's Liberation Movement.

"It was decided...the priority for this Conference will be women in the autonomous Women's Liberation Movement (emphasis-author)

This decision was also based on the interest expressed by the Vietnamese women in developing closer contact with and understanding of the Women's Liberation Movement." p.4 (emphasis - author

Now how did these women - who are not autonomous Women's Liberation - decide to choose the representation for autonomous WL? There There were 400 North Americans to be chosen. 20% were to be Canadian.

"Of the remaining 80% from the U.S., half will be reserved for Third World women. The remaining 40% will come from the Women's Liberation Movement with an attempt made to reach GI wives, women in the military and women working with GI wives." p.4

Incredible! First that they should determine who represents autonomous Women's Liberation and then that they will emphasize women working with women only because of their connection with a male - GI - who is in the army. This must be what they mean by an "anti-imperialist" "women's issue".

Also would they bother to insist that the choice of Third World women to represent Women's Liberation be those Third World women who are also working on women's issues? Because if not, they wouldn't represent Women's Liberation which is distinct from Third World Liberation.

Let us quote again from the leaflet. This is under the heading "Sub-regional Conference, Buffalo, N.Y." This is the point at which the author of this wo-manifesto (who is autonomous WL) was first informed of this projected Conference.

"The primary goal thus far & in the future will be to involve as many women in the Conference planning process as possible so that the Conference representatives will be truly representative of the WL Movement, selected democratically at the grass roots level."p.6

They made sure that wouldn't happen. But the real reason for the

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[1].This quote & all further quotes are from the leaflet distributed by the "anti-imperialist" women calling for a planning Conference in Buffalo, NY on Dec. 5-6, 1970

the interest in getting WL involved at this point is let out with incredible paternalism (so that one would almost have thought that a man had written the leaflet) just before this statement, and even earlier in the leaflet. If you aren't raging mad at this point - the worst is yet to come. The "anti-imperialist" women make this statement in the leaflet.

> "Discussions followed concerning the level of anti-imperialist consciousness within the Women's Liberation Movement in the various cities represented. It was evident that although there was both a high degree of women's consciousness and of anti-imperialist consciousness in various parts of the Movement, the relation between the two has not been made clear to most women in the Movement." p.3 (emphasis - author)

It was condescendingly kind of these women to say that there is, though only in various parts of the Women's Movement, a high degree of Women's consciousness as well as some consciousness about imperialism. But the two will have to be made clear to us - all of us shuffling dumb females.

The point that the "anti-imperialist" women don't have the foggiest idea of is that we KNOW WHAT IMPERIALISM IS IN OUR GUTS. We have never had self-determination as women and what's more we know it. And that's what imperialism is all about.

The Vietnamese women made it clear what they wanted and who they wanted to attend the Conference. We have shown how the planning sessions and projected Conference participants were not representative of the Women's Liberation Movement. Although the Vietnamese women wanted a Conference with Women's Liberation to find out more about the North American Women's Movement, the "anti-imperialist" women had other ideas about what the Conference should be. They decided that the Conference could be used to "educate" the Women's Movement about imperialism. They set about this in a very imperialistic fashion and in a most paternalistic manner.....

...What is remarkable about this leaflet is the "anti-imperialist" women's lack of concern - their chauvinist disregard - of the Women's Movements' in Third World countries, such as Vietnam. There is not even a hint - not one word - that the Women's Movements' in Indochina might be a concern to Women's Liberation in this country or that they might be of interest to "anti-imperialist" women.

All the leaflet describes is an attempt to "raise" the anti-imperialist consciousness (which in their definition is distinct from women's consciousness) of Women's Liberation about the Indochinese struggle.

The only connection made is where they report that the Vietnamese women want to meet with the Women's Liberation Movement to learn what is happening in the Women's Movement in North America. And presumably, to the Vietnamese women, and autonomous WL women, this means an exchange of information and ideas on the common problems of oppression and resistance to such oppression which we share as women.

But throughout the entire leaflet the "anti-imperialist" women ignore the very clear implications of the desire of Vietnamese women to meet with North American Women's Liberation. In fact, as we have shown, they disregard the Vietnamese women's wishes - as to true representation of Women's Liberation and as to what they have decided their planning conferences will do "for" Women's Liberation's "consciousness".

But the Vietnamese women, being closer to their own feelings, are much more sensitive than are the "anti-imperialist" women to the connections between Women's Movements' all over the world and the common bond of oppression which all women share. What the Vietnamese women see as an important indigenous Movement for freedom (the Women's Liberation Movement) which has deep connections with their own fight for freedom as a nation and particularly as women, the "anti-imperialist" American women only regard in this leaflet as a ready made tool for "educating" women on anti-imperialism...

...That the Vietnamese women, who are in the midst of a most hideous genocidal war being waged against them by the U.S., can see the importance of the women's freedom struggle and wish to know more about the Women's Liberation Movement in North America, should begin to open the eyes of the "anti-imperialist" women.

...A larger number of women were to be involved in the planning of the Conference than would go to the actual Conference (p.3). This was perhaps seen as a way of "educating" the Women's Movement but not of having them embarassingly represented in the actual meetings with the Indochinese women.

But if there is still any doubt in your mind as to what the planning conferences that the "anti-imperialist" women are setting up (to "prepare" for the Indochinese and North American "women's" conference) are really all about this final quote from page 4 and 5 of the leaflet may convince you.

> "160 women in "WL" in each region (three general regions) would be able to attend, our primary focus should not be on the Conference itself, but on the processes surrounding it. The direct goal would be to develop a program of activities building toward the Conference which would involve the entire Women's Liberation Movement in the planning process and which would raise the anti-imperialist consciousness of the WL movement."
> p. 4&5 (emphasis - author)

Then follows an outline of a program of how to do this beginning with contacting Women's Liberation to attend the "planning" conference in Buffalo.

But the "anti-imperialist" remain blind to the implications of the Vietnamese women's interest in Women's Liberation because it does not fit in with "their" (male Left imposed) view of the "relative importance" of the "anti-imperialist" (as they define it) and women's struggles for liberation.

In an interview printed in the "Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement" (August '68), a Vietnamese woman, Mrs. Than Van Pham said: "It is a long process of struggle. We are struggling to win effectively that right to be equal with men; it cannot come naturally. If you don't work, if you don't struggle, men will never recognize this equality with us. They always want to be superior to us; they have always been used to it. We have known so many centuries of oppression by men and by foreign invaders."...

And who would pay for the Conference? "Cost for the Conference is estimated at $10,000 dollars which U.S. Women's Liberation and WSP have taken responsibility for..." p.3

It then states that "the Washington women have agreed to devote the December 17th issue of "Off Our Backs" to questions of women and imperialism leading toward the December 20th Celebration." p.5

The plans for the use of the Women's Liberation Movement to "raise their consciousness" in the "planning" process of a Conference which is supposed to be between Women's Liberation and Vietnamese women but whose WL representation has been determined (unfavorably for WL) by "anti-imperialist" women (who make it clear they are not a part of the autonomous Women's Movement) is too strange to believe - if we didn't have the proof of it right here before us in their 6 page organizing leaflet.....
..... Women who still are acting for the Left male invisible audience but who now form women's collectives to organize women in relation to the priorities set up by a male Left are little more independent than they were working with the males. They are somewhere between fear and open rebellion. They fear to work on their own definition of women and women's issues and so still relate primarily to the invisible audience of "male heavies".

What a difference it would make - in terms of male approval - if the women working in "anti-imperialist" collectives or on "anti-imperialist" issues were working on their own women's issues. If they themselves developed a perspective on how women are a colonized group in relation to men all over the world, in all classes and races, including the Third World. With that perspective they would no longer be a part of the male Left. But it doesn't even seem to occur to the "anti-imperialist" women that the male definition of imperialism may be extended and perhaps truly was originally applicable to women.

The "anti-imperialist" women are trying to get women to work on "anti-imperialist" issues in a certain way they are defined by the male Left. We quote an article describing the last planning meeting that was held in Baltimore (Oct. 24-25). "In order to spread the word about the Conferences (planning) more widely and to get women involved in anti-war activities, a series of actions are being planned as part of a whole anti-imperialist offensive of women." (from "Battle Acts" published by Women of Youth Against War and Fascism)

It's one thing to be against the Vietnam War and all wars and quite another for a group of women to try to draw women working in their own Movement away from it into the male dominated very narrowly defined anti-war and anti-imperialist Movements. The same mistake happened at one point (there's always something more "important" than female liberation) when a large segment of the earlier Feminist Movement went into Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and fizzled out as a threatening force in the society.

The demand for an end to sex roles and male imperialist domination is a real attack on the masculine citadel of war. Alfter all women don't declare or fight in offensive wars. War is a male institution - as are all other institutions in the society - and war is simply an extension of the colonial policy of the subjection of the female culture and "weaker" male cultures i.e. "weaker" national cultures. Women, who have nothing to say about running the country or fighting in the war will never end war except by attacking and ending male domination and the sex roles where men learn their war-mentality. The women who went into WILPF took the safest and therefore totally ineffective and reactionary (for women) way out. They opted to reinforce the split between male and female and to use their "feminine myths" to act as adjuncts to the male Peace Movement and claim that women's voice was needed (in the same old role of course) to save men from themselves - their own self-imposed slaughter. The oppressed are going to "save" with their oppressed "virtues" (defined by males and unsifted and unquestioned) their own oppressors.

The anti-imperialist women, in a new refrain to an old song are in essence asking that women in the independent Women's Movement to focus their energies on "anti-imperialism" as the male Left defines it. This is like asking the Women's Movement to move from a position of independence to a position of subservience to the male dominated Left.

But the Women's Liberation Movement started out from the Civil Rights Freedom Movement, Student Movement and Anti-War Movement, Women got the notion working in these movements that the idea of freedom should apply to women too. But the males in these movements never intended the freedom struggle to extend to women. It is still too subversive an idea for any of these movements to tolerate on any real level. So many women who got the freedom bug too bad left to relate to women in a Female Movement.

And just as the freedom and anti-war struggle never applied to women so neither does the present Left anti-imperialist movement. Is there any analysis about imperialism against women? Is there any recognition in writing or action that women are a colonized group - brutally exploited by their colonizers - men - and that this is a primary fact of women's existence? No. And this kind of analysis will never happen in the male dominated Left or its periphery because males are the colonizers. And the colonizer has never yet defined his privileges out of existence - only the colonized will.

The male Left has absolutely no interest in a female revolution. Rather, the male Left has a direct interest in perpetuating the status quo i.e. male privileges, and preventing any real threats to male supremacy from both within the Left and without it.

P.S. We also suggest to women that they do not go to the planning meetings for the Conference but that all autonomous women who can make it go to the Conference to talk to the Vietnamese women without invitation from the "anti-imperialist" women.
The reason we suggest not going to the planning meetings is so women will continue to work on our priorities - women.
The actual conferences with the Indochinese women are planned for March 24th thru April 7th, 1971. There are 3 planned - in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. We suggest women contact other women in their area to make arrangements to go to the conference closest to them. We need a lot of independent Women's Liberation women to go to the conference.

## A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING THE LEFT— THE SPECTRE OF FEMINISM

The only real threat to male supremacy is the independent Women's Movement. Therefore the male Left has done a great deal to impede the development of independent Women's Liberation and tried in numerous ways to co-opt the energies of women away from working independently with other women on women's issues. There have been numerous devices used by the Left to this end depending on the situation and the consciousness of the women involved.

The first tactic in reaction to WL was laughter. But that didn't stop some women- in fact it made some of them so furious they left and began "organizing" other women. The next tactic was anger. "You castrating bitches", "What do you women want anyway?" And that didn't work either - even more women left to join the newly emerging independent Women's Movement.

Then the men began to get really nervous- after all women were leaving the Left in increasing numbers - and the men began to play quilt games. "So what makes you think you're oppressed, you white middle class chick?" (Notice the order of the defining words the male Left uses - "chick" is last) That tactic made some women even madder but it began to cut deep into many women. And this tactic began to work on some of the less strong women - those who were still full of white male imposed guilt and self-hatred. The Left males realized that they had struck a tender nerve. And they began to manipulate women's guilt and started becoming very liberal towards the Women's Liberation Movement - that is, when they weren't chuckling about those "frustrated bitches" in male only company. And they had to be liberal anyway because that God-damned Women's Liberation Movement composed only of females was putting the heat on them and they might lose "their" women to it if they didn't play it cool. So they put up with the discomfort of women's caucuses rather than lose all"their" women to the independent Women's Movement. At first it was pretty rough and more than one male Left organization folded under the pressures of the women's caucuses.

But then the Left males began to see the the women's caucuses could have some real value for their organizations. They could be used as important organizing tools for recruiting new members and for working with women associated with the males whose problems the Left organization was concerned with. Such as having the women work with GI wives while the men worked at organizing the GI's in the army. Women in the caucuses express best the male attitudes of the organization towards "women's issues" and women's struggle for liberation. We give only two examples out of many. One is a leaflet passed out by PAR (People Against Racism) women at a Women's Liberation Conference in Detroit in 1968. They list as one of their concerns something which reveals the manipulative way in which the Women's Movement is viewed. They wish to use "Women's Liberation as an organizing tactic for broader political movement". Bernadine Dohrn's equally blatant statement in the "New Left Notes" special issue on women is every bit as revealing. She says, "Everywhere around us there are concentrations of women: dorms, women's schools, education and home economics departments, high schools, jobs - women can be mobilized to fight against imperialism and racism". Maybe women's caucuses were really boon to the male Left and not the threat they had expected them to be and which there were - at first.

So a pattern was generally established throughout the male Left that women could stay in the caucuses and organize other women into the Left male dominated Movement as long as they concentrated on:
1) Raising women's issues mainly as they related to the structure of the male dominated organization whom the women remained working for
2) Raising women's issues on the periphery of the male defined "important" issues of the organization
3) Relating to the Women's Liberation Movement as caucus members only of the primary male organization to "raise" the issues of the male organization in the Women's Movement, and, if possible get its focus off independent women's struggle and onto how women can relate to male defined Left issues

Women's collectives, unless they are truly autonomous women's collectives working from their own analysis on women's issues, can be and are used in much the same manner as the Left women's caucuses. Because they too relate primarily to the male Left Movement and only secondarily as females to female liberation issues. They are one step ahead of the women's caucuses if only because they know they can no longer work with males in the organization - but they still remain working for them even though now working in women's collectives. Also "women's collectives" is now being used by a number of women as synonomous with caucus group - but a more "hip" term than caucus.

Reprinted from the Fourth World Manifesto
(see pages six and seven)

Connie Bille

## A Privilege Not A Right

Who is in Women's Liberation? Generally women who are young, white, from a middle-class background, and publicly heterosexual. And it is the problems of these women that are dealt with in the course put together by a women's health collective in Boston. There are consistent remarks about how medical care should be available to all and how sexuality should be more a matter of choice, but they are left as reminders. The course also contains many pictures of third world and working class women, but they will not find their needs addressed to in this book.

Not only is health care a privilege, health itself is. Health is physical and emotional growing room, good food and protection against the elements. Too many of these needs left unfulfilled starts a vicious cycle (poor health - no work - no money - no physical necessities - poor health). I am not advocating ignoring our needs, but that we should put our effort where it's needed. Just as abortion reform means those of us who could pay for unsafe, unclean abortions can now get safe, clean ones, health courses for middle-class women means that those of us who could get acceptable medical care before can probably get better care now.

Sex and sexuality can be an important part of our lives. But we have the education, confidence (and perhaps economic independence) to make demands in our sexual relationships with men. The course seems to assume that women already have some amount of individual sexual freedom.

Lesbianism - or any love shared between women, is not dealt with in any real way in the course. It is not considered even as an alternative, let alone as an expression of love for women. The sections on orgasm and virginity specifically mention men as the sexual partner.

While "why be pregnant" is handled pretty well, "why not" isn't. Zero Population Growth aside, there are children in adoption agencies (and some not in them) who need a home. Children also usually assume a nuclear family, which Women's Liberation often questions only in theory. And, if we look at children as people - with rights, we must consider the world in which they're going to live. It's not just a question of establishing counter-cultures, but how little we know about sex-role socialization and thus how to not repeat the mistakes of all our parents. This is not after-the-revolution; saying that our children must be whole people does not make it so.

But pregnancy can be cool - if you have the money and time for pre-natal check-ups, classes, etc. (let alone if you have the support of the father of the child). Perhaps doctors will listen to our demands for decent care during pregnancy (including control over childbirth - the method of delivery, type of anesthesia, presence of father, etc.). But any kind of a decent experience is a privilege, not a right.

The inconvenience of clinics is dealt with in the last chapter. What isn't dealt with is the totally degrading way in which you are treated. The two clinics I've been in were very different, although both were in teaching hospitals. The one in a college town was really nice and the people seemed relatively human. The other was on the edge of a poor black neighborhood in Philadelphia. I was already panicked from bleeding heavily, and I got bloodier because I had to wait so long to get into the Ob-Gyn clinic. And then I was treated like shit. Next time I went to a private doctor (I had the money). Other women did not - do not - have that alternative.

How can we, who probably can already get decent care, refrain from getting better care for ourselves and work for better care for those who need it?

The course can be ordered from NEFP, 791 Tremont, Boston, Mass.

## AN OPEN LETTER TO THE GAY CELL

This letter to AIAW is really a note of thanks to all the girls in the Gay Cell I have had the pleasure of meeting and to those I have not met. I think of all 11 of them as close friends who have done much more for me than I can ever hope to do for them.

I guess in many ways I've used the cell for myself. The most important thing being that I am a woman, first and foremost. Many really feel down on men, i.e., get rid of them, take them or leave them, etc., etc. I've had enough dealing with men that at times they make me sick to my stomach. It would take time if all men were destroyed or put in their place for those women to discover that we as human beings would not survive for long and I guess you'd have to decide how long, long is.

Another thing which has amazed me is many feel as though this whole liberation movement is moving so slowly. I just wish I had had the guts to do what they are doing now, 20 years ago. My god, I sit back in amazement each day and can hardly believe that which has happened in the past two years has really come to pass. I must admit that my main interest has been with the Gay Cell and will remain with that phase of Liberation; I feel totally liberated with everything else except that. This group has made me feel as though I as a human being have so much to offer others I can go to those meetings and express myself. They may not agree with me in all I say, but I feel they're interested in what I have to say. They well know I don't agree with them in many ways, but I am am still interested. We don't put each other down and that's what is so important to me.

I could name names of those of you who have helped me so much more than they know, but names are so unimportant as they already know who they are and to those of you who don't, I thank you any way. I only hope I can in time repay all of you and if not you someone else who was given so much at a time when I though life was pretty awful. I hope and look forward to the day when we can all find true happiness each in our own way.

In closing I have only this to say about everything: "It Goes On" and I can say this at a time when I am very uncertain about tomorrow, the only exception being that I know I am much loved and needed.

# Gimme Womans Shelter

When I got the last issue of Rat and read about Gimme Womans Shelter, I got so exited for all the sisters in New York, for the women who had seized the building, for the politics involved. Women were acting to fill their own needs, by taking over a huge, abandoned city-owned building on New Years Eve, and converting it into a womens center to provide shelter, a child-care center, a free clinic, a food co-op, a lesbian rights center, a feminist school and an abortion information center.

During the 12 day occupation the women scraped and painted the walls, the floors were repaired, glass was donated for the windows that were broken and the boiler was almost fixed. I just wished to see in Rat more personal experiences of those 12 days....with so many hundreds of women coming and going there must have been an incredible amount of feminist relationships.

My head immediately envisioned similar actions in cities and towns throughout the country.... why one building, then another building, then a block, then a community, a city, a country, the possibilities.....

Our love to all the sisters in New York for their inspiring action.

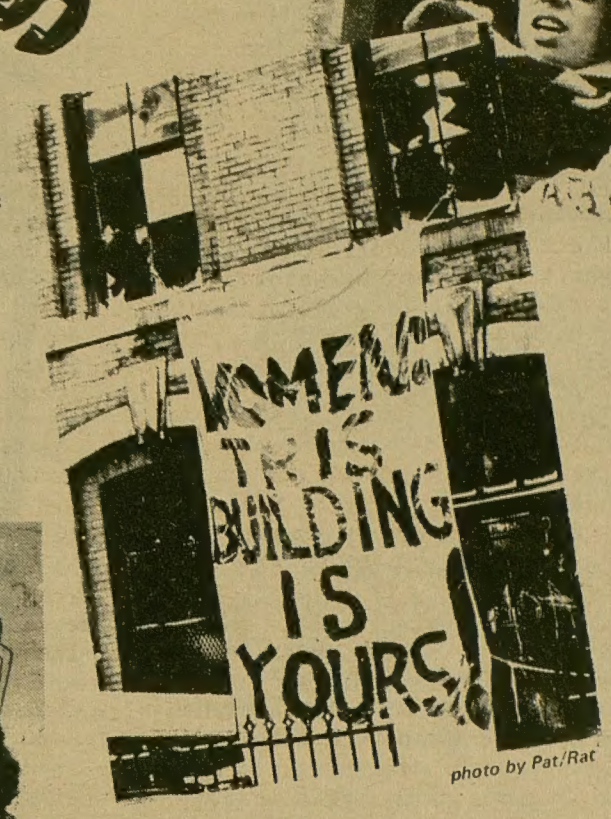

photo by Pat/Rat

reprinted from the Liberated Guardian

**Women battle the police**

On January 12, the Tactical Police Force (TPF) surrounded the building. No women were allowed to enter and three who refused to leave were arrested.

The next morning, while a picket line formed outside, some twenty women managed to enter the building. The TPF told them they had five minutes to leave or be busted for criminal trespass. The women refused to leave.

The TPF tried to throw them out. In the back of the building, the pigs attacked a group of women who had been trapped. Twenty-four women were busted for trespass, 4 of them for assault. Five pigs were treated for minor injuries.

**City sells women out**

The city vacated the East 5th Street building—the former Department of Welfare Women's Shelter—four years ago, leaving holes in the floor, live electrical wires, broken glass, an open elevator shaft, and a leaking sewage system. The building was a hazard to the community and the city had taken no responsibility for it.

The city had indicated to the women a few days before the police action that there was a possibility of holding the building unmolested. During the initial talks with representatives of the mayor's office, the city also took under consideration repairing the building.

The sellout has continued since the eviction. The city promised that equipment from the medical project, the food co-op, and the child care center, and the personal belongings of the women, would be stored in the court building until claimed. Instead, these things were taken to the Bureau of Encombrances, which has a long record of "losing" many of the items stored there.

While women held the building they began changing a health hazard into a useful space. Despite the lack of heat, the lead-based paint had been scraped and the walls repainted, broken glass had been swept up and equipment for the projects assembled. The food co-op and schools were underway. A clothing exchange was in operation.

The building, which has also been a welfare center, is almost ideal for a community center. It is large and divided into areas suitable for group activities. The city claims that the building is not structurally sound, but a woman architect who went over the plans assured the sisters that its girder-reinforced construction was sound. The wiring is in good shape and the glass can easily be repaired with new glass (already donated to the women). The only thing in need of major repair is the plumbing.

An investigation found that the plumbing job would cost about $10,000, but it would cost about $50,000 for the city to have the building torn down.

**Project in exile**

The women are demanding that the TPF get out of the building and return it to them. They are also demanding a lease and money for essential services and utilities. On Saturday, January 16, 500 demonstrated in support of these demands near the site of the building. The demonstration lasted two hours despite the sub-freezing weather. Although the pigs prevented anyone from picketing in front of the building, everyone's spirits were high.

After the demonstration, sisters met in the Ikon storefront to establish a Fifth Street Women's Community in Exile. During the meeting women formed small groups to continue projects begun in the building. For the next two weeks, the center will be working out of the storefront. The food co-op will have its first sale January 23. Other projects will be underway as soon as equipment and space are available.

# HAPPY BIRTH RAT

3 is different than
2 is different than
1

One: if you want it done, you do it.

Two: a division of labor
one is good at some things, and sort of likes to do them.

one is neither, and doesn't like to do a whole lot at all if there's a way around it.

Three:
Three exacerbates and defines what two didn't know ( had forgotten- didn't want to know) existed.

Three defines a division of labor that was realized in an unspoken way, and probably accepted there.

We grow up learning how to be 2
Never learning about 3
or 4 or more.

Perhaps it is because there is a 2 and a 1.

P.S. Perhaps not.

We are a collective of eight women functioning as a world wide conspiracy of Radical Lesbians.

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If your group wants to receive bundles of AIN'T I A WOMAN?, send 15¢ per copy. Minimum bundle: 20 copies

# LETTER FROM SEATTLE

We received the following letter from SEATTLE RADICAL WOMEN, 2940 36th Avenue South, Seattle, Washington 98144

Dear Sisters:

In the past two weeks, we have received several statements concerning the YSA-SWP's participation in the women's movement. Some of the statements vary widely in their factual accounting of specific incidents, but one thing is clear: It is now YSA-SWP policy to actively participate in the women's movement.

Many women's organizations have basic and principled differences with the YSA-SWP; certainly that is the case with Seattle Radical Women. Among them are sharp differences on the interconnections between women's liberation and other struggles for liberation both here and in other countries, on the role of women and the women's movement in revolutionary struggle, and on the nature and importance of democratic and straightforward organizational methods.

THE SINGLE-ISSUE "VANGUARD"

Several of the founding members of Seattle Radical Women left the SWP in 1964 - along with the entire Seattle branch - precisely because of the SWP's consistent refusal to deal with women's issues in any but the most token fashion, their opportunism and reformism in the black movement, and finally, because of the deterioration of internal democracy and Leninist organizational practices of the party in general.

These were women who had spent as much as 30 years of their lives as SWP members, spokesmen, and organizers. They left the party after several years of intense theoretical writing and debate inside the party over these issues, and only when it became clear that the entire direction of the party was away from principled politics of any kind.

Documentation of this split, and the theoretical writing by the Seattle branch that led to the split, are available from the Freedom Socialist Party, which was later formed by the former Seattle branch of the SWP.

After the split, the SWP-YSA imported a new cadre to build a new organization here in Seattle. In the years following the split, they have staunchly maintained that women have no special role in the revolutionary movement, that an independent women's movement would be divisive, and that since our liberation cannot be achieved under capitalism anyway, we should wait till "after the revolution" to attempt it. The new YSA-SWP also claimed that they had "no problem" with male chauvinism in their own organization.

Now, presented with the fact of a mass women's movement, and in the face of a declining anti-war movement, the "vanguard party" is simply transferring its policy from the anti-war movement to the women's movement. This does not indicate any change in basic direction on their part, nor does it imply a significant theoretical change in their view of the women's movement. The women's movement is now "acceptable" to the YSA-SWP because it can serve as a feeder movement into the general revolutionary struggle, i.e. their own organizations, and because it is clear that the conspicuous absence of the YSA-SWP from the women's movement must end if they are to have even an ounce of credibility to anyone.

The policy of the SWP-led anti-war movement was to maintain a mass movement at its lowest common denominator, to resist any attempts to raise the political consciousness of the movement as a whole, and to confine it to a single-issue rather than recognizing the fundamental nature of the interconnections between racism, sexism, the exploitation of workers, and imperialism. Numbers of bodies at demonstrations were seen as more significant than the political consciousness that was developed among people who were against the war.

But coupled with this single-issue policy for the movement as a whole was an intensive recruitment of more politically advanced individuals. This political schizophrenia carried out by a powerful and well-organized national apparatus, was the prime force of the moderate and respectable--and now virtually defunct--single issue anti-war movement.

We believe that this method of organizing, and the analysis it flows from, is as wrong for the women's movement as it was for the anti-war movement.

PRINCIPLED POLITICS, PRINCIPLED ORGANIZATION

But we are disturbed by the alleged threat of YSA-SWP "takeover" of the women's movement. The "threat" is, we believe, due not only to the historical opportunism and maneuverism of the YSA-SWP, but also to the lack of organizational clarity and consistency of most women's organizations.

We have had no problem with YSA members entering our organization because our program delineates our founding principles: (1) that the woman question is a first-priority political issue of world historical importance, (2) that women, and most particularly black, brown and working women, will (and already have) play a vanguard role in the American revolutionary struggle, and (3) that there is an integral and basic interconnection between women's liberation and all other struggles for liberation, since the most oppressed half of every oppressed race and class is composed of our sisters. Neither the YSA nor the SWP can claim to agree with that program, and since our organizational structure stipulates agreement on program as the basis for membership, none of them would bother even to apply.

The conflict between the YSA-SWP and many women's organizations is, we think a conflict between the opportunist and manipulative organizational methods that are the result of the opportunist political program of the YSA-SWP on the one hand, and groups of women with no clear program or organization on the other. The vulnerability of these groups to political and/or organizational domination by the YSA-SWP--or anyone else, for that matter--is the result of their own failure to organize themselves in a serious fashion. This failure results not only in the vulnerability of such loose-knit groups to wild changes in direction as new people join them, but also in endless paralysis when there is no agreed-upon method of resolving internal differences about program and policy changes.

Whether or not these issues--of organizational seriousness and programmatic integrity--are raised by the intervention of the YSA-SWP, it is still essential to the growth of the women's movement that they be dealt with and resolved. Our organizational methods reflect our politics, just as the YSA-SWP's organizational practices reflect their politics. If we are serious in our belief that women are a vanguard force, and serious about the priority of winning the liberation of our sex, then it is our responsibility to express that seriousness and determination through our respect for organizational honesty and consistency. Only then can we really fulfill the vanguard function of political leadership that the movement as a whole so desperately needs.

Yours in struggle,

Jill Severn for
Seattle Radical Women

THIS PAGE IS FROM THE MINOT,

NORTH DAKOTA WOMEN'S LIBERATION

# THE MINOT MEANIES :

## feminism in north dakota

GETTING IT TOGETHER

We began a year ago when three military wives called a meeting of nine women to discuss The Feminine Mystique. We have continued meeting weekly as a Women's Liberation study group, reading about and discussing the issues and doing some consciousness raising. Eventually we branched out and spoke about Women's Liberation to several groups in town: sociology classes at Minot State, town women who came to meetings in the Public Library, and Air Force nurses. One of our members spoke to ZPG and a church group on abortion law repeal.

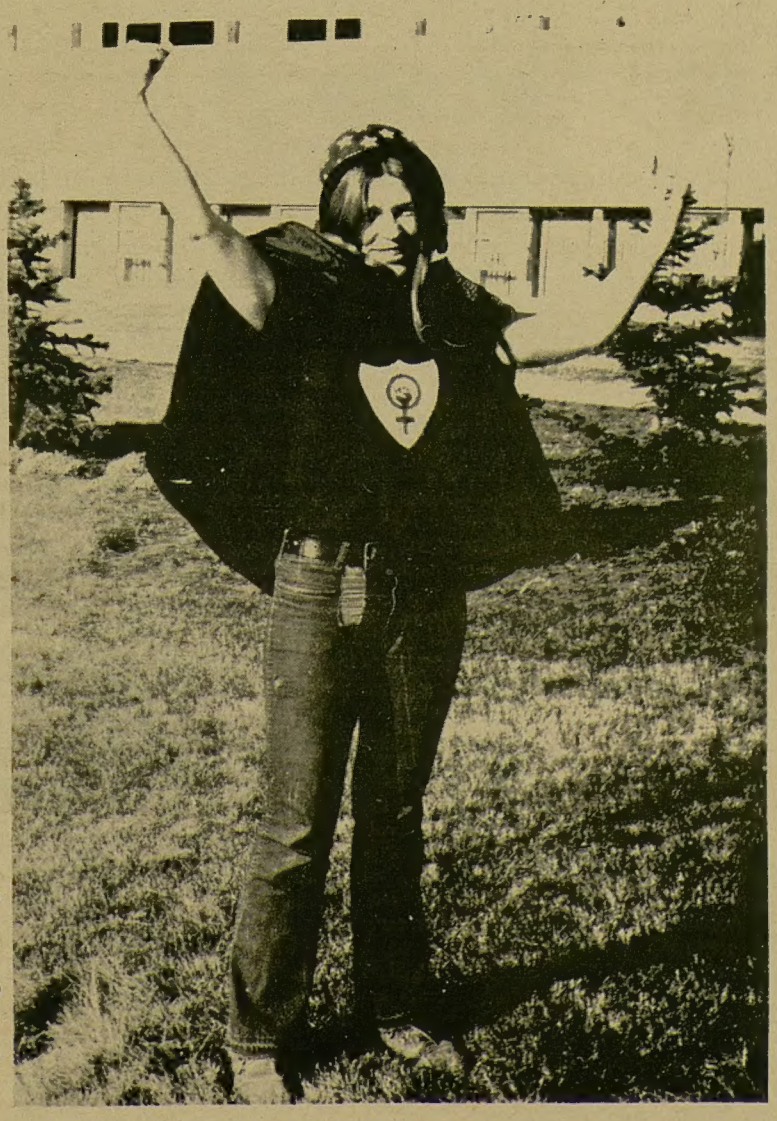
We helped set up a rap center (called OPEN) where we meet at 7 p.m. on the second and last Monday of each month and where we have informal raps occasionally. There's a group of married women on base, another is about to form, a college group is reorganizing, and some high school women are getting together.

We've leafletted the "Little Miss" contest (we called it the "Little Miss Heifer" contest to parallel the State Fair cattle shows). Last fall college jocks posted a "cattle crossing" sign and heckled women provoking the women to post a "male chauvinist pig" sign in revenge. They also held a guerilla action in the student union where Super Sister saved an unfortunate comrade from male intimidation. The Minot Women's Collective compiled a feminist appointment calendar (see ad this page) with help from women across the country. We think it's a good feminist statement.

Plans for the future include an assault on the state legislature for abortion repeal, a women's counselling service, a speakers bureau, library displays, leafletting, spontaneous actions, and a state women's liberation conference.

We're small, we struggle with small-town apathy and paranoia, but we're getting stronger. If we can make it here, we can do it anywhere.

Minot Sisters.



day by day

super sister

day by day

a coming together

UPPER MIDWEST WL DIRECTORY,

Help us end our feelings of isolation and establish a means of getting in touch with each other to share ideas.

We're compiling a listing of WL groups and contacts in our area--especially N.D., S.D. Mont., Mn., Wyo., and Iowa. We'll make the list available to women and groups who would like to receive it and share the information with an international WL directory compiled in Calif: MUSHROOM EFFECT, P.O. Box 6024, Albany, Calif 94706. Available for 50¢.

If you are in a group or are an individual who would be a contact for an area and are not already listed in MUSHROOM EFFECT, please send your name, address, phone no. and a short description about you or the group to us:

MINOT WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE
P.O. Box 235
Minot, North Dakota 58701

We'd be glad to put up women who are traveling through and hope this directory might include others who would do that too.
Contacts here: Linda Bryan (701) 727-4991
OPEN--rap center where some of our meetings are held--(701) 838-5502 6-12 p.m.


DAY BY DAY

1971 Calendar/Appointment Book

Edited and Designed by Women

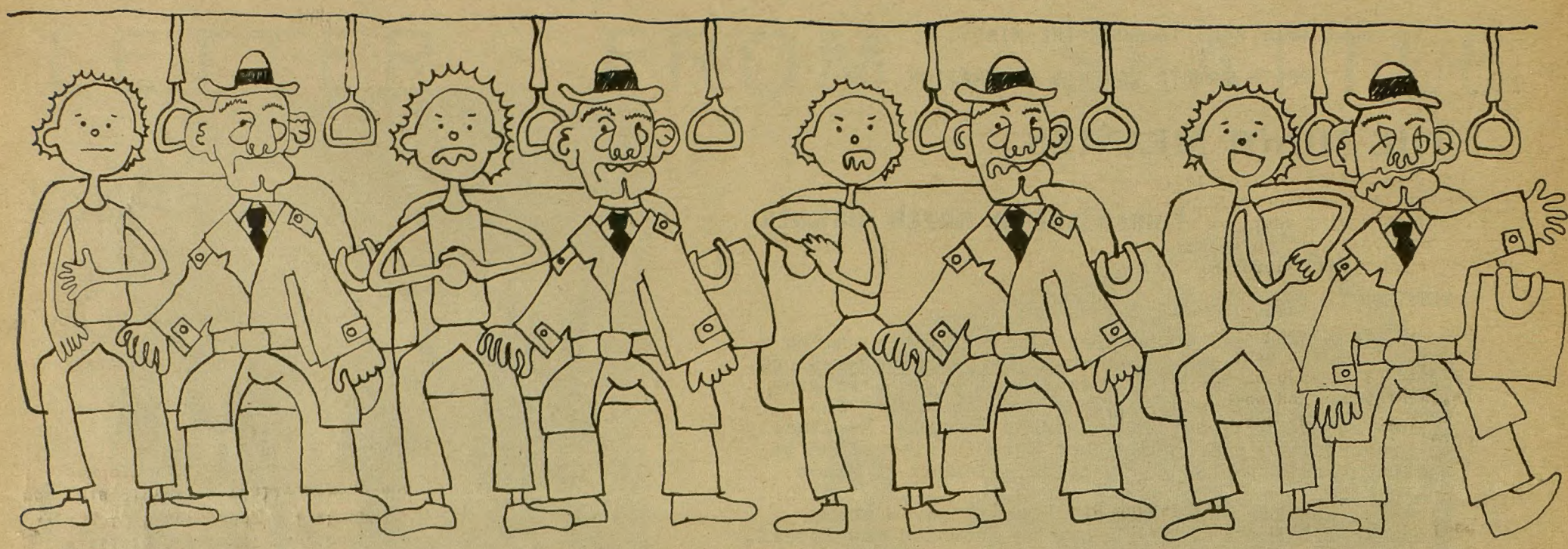
compiled by minot women's collective

p o box 235

minot north dakota 58701

1 copy $2.25

10 or more $2.00 ea.



A basic principle of self defense is to use your strength against your attacker's weakness. Elbows are strong — facial bones & wind pipes are weak.

If someone bothers you in a car or theater or train, hit him with your elbow:

Clasp your hands together at your chest placing one fist inside the other cupped hand-like a ball & socket.

Don't fold your hands, because they will slip apart upon impact & lessen the force of the blow. Twist your body away from the attacker to gain momentum, but always keep him in your sight.

Then using the strong muscles in your torso & back, twist your weight toward him, and at the end of the arc snap your elbow into his face with the muscles in your arm.

# Open Letter To Our Indochinese Sisters

January 13, 1971

To Our Indochinese Sisters - Greetings,

We are pleased and excited to learn of your desire to meet with women from the Women's Liberation movement in North America. But we are also saddened to find out that the conferences that have been organized do not comply with your wishes to meet with women from Women's Liberation so as to better understand the Women's movement in North America.

The way the conferences are being planned reveals that they will neither represent the women nor the ideas of the independent Women's Liberation movement.

In an effort to communicate out concerns over this situation with you we are sending you a copy of "Fourth World Manifesto". The "Manifesto" explains why we feel the projected conferences do not comply with your desires to meet with a representative group of women from the Women's Liberation movement in North America.

We are also trying to circulate this "Manifesto" to women in the independent Women's Liberation movement here urging them to attend the conferences. We hope that in this way a truer representation of the Women's Liberation movement will be able to meet with you.

We look forward to meeting with you and sharing information and feelings about our common oppression as women.

With Love and Warm Wishes for Success,

From some women in the Women's Liberation Movement

Barbara Burris
Kathy Barry
Joann Parent
Terry Moon
Joann DeLor
Cate Stadelman

# NICE GUYS?

This scene sort of started me into writing:

While I was visiting this sister, and we were working out some things, exchanging information, getting it together--her husband came in from classes. He's a gentle, friendly freak, and he looked happy, energetic. I had to use the phone (anyway) so I turned around to it as he sat down behind her and held her, nuzzling; she seemed still absorbed in thinking. On the wall to their left is a poster: a young man sitting on a rock, captioned: "Trying to Understand." I thought how this sister is really strong and independent. I know she'll leave him. I know he won't be able to understand. Right then I flashed "I feel sorry for him, but there's no way."

The "Exceptional" Male

That they are exceptions if they're non-sexist, gentle, passive (no, that's allowed) and don't need the ego boost of being supremacists. There are models - respected by straight culture (even gay?) Jesus, Ghandi & movie "sensitive" guys.

It's a <u>choice</u> for a man to be gentle
a choice women don't have

There's a lot of reward at this point for an exceptional dude--all those turned off women! - & being a model of post-revolutionary behavior--admiration and trust of women & men who are struggling & gay dudes. "Even a mother could love him" & People who put down his gentleness are those he doesn't respect anyway. Seems he has a plethora of options! He can take the pigshit options and get away with some of them, once maybe. Like mine - desertion. Or scaring a woman by sudden reversal to pigshit behavior - her immediate reaction - "This is not like you" "something is wrong--maybe me" etc.

Women can feel sorry for a dude and hang on and he doesn't have to be much besides pitiful--exceptionals get this sometimes; real bastards also can get a woman's help for being helpless.

Class: middle class males have more choices.

can be aggressive = reward
= destruction
= inhibition by "society"

or passive = dropout
= low but stable position
= catatonia, incarceration

But lower class males are less rewarded have less choice

aggressive = upward social mobility
= destruction, street fights, jail
The line is <u>thin</u>.

passive = skid row, alcoholism
= junk, forces some aggressive behavior

No one is going to "take care" of the passive lower class male
except pitying females who'll feed his habit.

Being a nice guy isn't enough. To be revolutionary means doing more than not-doing. A nice guy who only refuses his prerogative to oppress females isn't doing any more than a catatonic male who also actively doesn't oppress women. Men can subvert their privileges.

Are pre-revolutionary heterosexual scenes possible <u>outside</u> of the structures now available? - marriage is oppressive, "going steady" is oppressive, commune scenes, prostitution, living together.

He is kind but he doesn't suffer like a woman does and he doesn't really know those pains.

Could he stand to be your lover and yet not be the most important person in your life?